

Republican-passed budget would kill funds stuck in grant process

March 7, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) announced a decision by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to obligate \$13.5 million in competitive grant funding to finish repairs on the Coos Bay rail line and restore rail service vital to the coastal economy . The funds got caught up in bureaucratic red tape and DeFazio intervened, asking DOT to expedite the approval process due to the passage of the House Republican budget, H.R. 1, which would cut certain types of unobligated DOT funding, including the Coos Bay grant.

“It was essential that DOT fast track this critical grant which will restore service on the Coos Bay rail line. The Republican majority passed a budget eliminating funds waiting for DOT approval, and the Coos Bay rail line could have lost this grant had the process not been expedited,” DeFazio said. “I am happy that DOT cut through the bureaucratic red tape and that Coos Bay can count on this money to improve the rail line to better serve the major employers in the area that depend on it to get their goods to market.”

The Coos Bay Line was embargoed by the Central Oregon and Pacific Railroad (CORP) in

September 2007, which resulted in the loss of hundreds of jobs and had negative impacts on businesses in Southwest Oregon. Since CORP embargoed the Coos Bay line, DeFazio has worked with the Port of Coos Bay, and state and local shippers, to get the line reopened.

DeFazio testified before the Federal Surface Transportation Board to encourage them to approve the Port's application to force the sale of the line to the Port from CORP. DeFazio also secured \$8 million in federal funds in March 2009, to help the Port of Coos Bay buy the rail line.

The Port of Coos Bay applied for a competitive TIGER 2 grant to rehabilitate the Coos Bay Rail Line last summer. The \$13.5 million federal grant was awarded to the Port last October and will be matched by \$1 million from the Port. DeFazio supported the Port's TIGER II application and personally called the Secretary of Transportation in support of the application.

The TIGER II funds will allow the Port to upgrade the rail line to Track Classification 2 (25 mph) and 3 (40 mph) to improve service and make it possible to operate the train between Coquille and Eugene with only one crew instead of two, allowing the new railroad to move more loads in a more timely and cost-efficient manner.

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